

# The Role of the Architect in Slum Upgrading Practices

Developing methods and tools for improved participatory planning



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## 1 Introduction

High rates of urbanization in developing countries lead to a big and often problematic issue of providing housing and shelter, especially for the urban poor. It is claimed that the work of the architectural profession only reaches 1/3 of the world's population (UN-Habitat, 2003). The people who live in slums, favelas, squatter settlements and shantytowns of the developing world, are the large majority of humanity who are left in the position of being their own architects and planners, providing and shaping their own housing and environment. The living conditions in the slums, or informal settlements, are often chaotic and unsafe due to lack of overall planning, poor infrastructural support, poor quality of housing construction, no access to water, poor sanitary conditions and the insecure status of residential ownership or tenure. According to UN-Habitat, the world population will rise to 9,5 billion people within the next thirty years. The urbanization in the world will continue to grow rapidly and by the year 2050, 7 out of 10 people will live in urban areas (Åstrand, 2014). It is likely that many of these dwellers will be forced to seek shelter in the informal, with great consequences following. In the years ahead, the demand for housing will rise drastically, causing numerous stress

on our cities and our environment. Unless the increased demand for housing in our cities are met, the informal settlements of the world will continue to expand, contributing to the rise of social problems and causing an increased stress on the environment (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). What is required to improve the living conditions of the urban poor? Further, what can architects offer in improving environments and lives in the informal settlements of the world?

The aims of this paper is to discuss the role of the architect in upgrading practices of informal settlements. The discussion will center around the cooperation between the architect and the communities in these practices. Further, the paper will argue the implementation of community participation as an approach to the planning process and upgrading practice. By discussing practical methods and tools of participatory planning, another aim is to stress the importance of developing the practice of community-based design. The motive is to seek what role the architect could and should have in developing participatory planning into a useful and accurate method in practices regarding upgrading of informal settlements.

## 2 Urban Shelter Development

The rapid urban population increase from the 1960s and forward, has resulted in massive unauthorized city expansions all over the world (unhabitat.org.13, 2014). The steady flow of migrating dwellers from rural to urban areas has proven to provide large challenges in finding effective housing solutions. Many efforts have been done to turn around these downward trends by enabling shelter strategies. Slum upgrading programs led by either governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or by the private sector, have been developed and implemented in informal settlements all over the world. Unfortunately, they often have high monetary costs and have frequently proven to fail in the long term (unhabitat.org.13, 2014). Why do they fail? The practice of upgrading informal settlements needs to be evaluated and developed so that the effort and investment of shelter provision demonstrate a more consistent long-term positive impact.

“Housing must be seen as a continuous incremental process, and not as a physical

artefact designed and built at one moment in time” (Vestbro, 2008). A slum upgrading program is not a collection of independently technical actions. It should be an integrated and comprehensive practice, engaging instances in an interdisciplinary way, aiming to improve quality of life.

## Upgrading as policy

Slum upgrading is a process where informal settlements gradually improve and are incorporated in the formal city. This process aims to provide the informal settlers the same economical, social and institutional service as other city residents, mainly via legalizing properties and providing security of ownership or tenure (citiesalliance.org). The actors of enabling shelter upgrading strategies could be either the central or local governments, NGOs (i.e. civil society organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations), multilateral and international organizations (i.e. The World Bank, UN-Habitat, SIDA) or the private sector. Further, community-action from grassroots-level should also be considered a main facilitator of shelter upgrading (UN-Habitat, 1992). A truly sustainable upgrading project is one that reduces a community’s vulnerability through a strengthening of the resources, initiatives and social capital of the community. To achieve this is difficult without the involvement of the community in the upgrading process (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

In the 1970s, governments of many developing countries accepted their own inability to meet the housing needs of their low-income populations through their conventional policy norm of providing shelter (Skinner, Taylor & Wegelin, 1987). A more productive form of housing and shelter production and financing had to be searched for and tested. This change in policy, in terms of the role of state financing, implied a direction towards a new take on shelter provision. Shortly, the role of state became such of an “*enabler* rather than a *provider*” (Skinner, Taylor & Wegelin, 1987), and the new policies were promoting the involvement of the end users, the informal settlers, in all aspects, from building to financing and management of the constructions and built environments.

Today, UN-Habitat and other bodies concerned with issues regarding informal settlements agree that housing policies in the past has to be replaced due to their inability to address the problems of expanding informal settlements. They argue that the top-down model has expired and new policies and models should be developed. The “Enabling Strategy” is on the rise which includes “community participation, gradual slum upgrading, self-help construction and formalization of informal settlements” (Vestbro, 2008). In this shift of policy, the end users would take on a more responsible role and be partners in the execution of shelter upgrading. Concepts such as “self-help” and “user-participation” shares the idea that an owner or occupier would have greater incentive to keep a higher level of maintenance if involved in a self-managed construction (Skinner, Taylor & Wegelin, 1987). Nowadays, the success of an upgrading project is not only measured in terms of its physical improvement, but also by its level of sustainability and effect on social aspects (UN-Habitat, 2003). UN-Habitat currently advocates participatory planning approaches in slum upgrading practices, and especially in the most marginalized and segregated areas. In slum upgrading practices, it is important to have an integrated and area-based approach to participatory planning supported by information gathering and analysis (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

What has not always been recognized, in the aspects of slum upgrading, is that the existing residents of informal settlements already are in an incremental process of their own, building their own homes and neighbourhoods. The informal settlements are in this way already “projects” in process and the local residents are the leaders of this process. The self-building informal settlement is the result of incremental steps of the settlements own making (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2003). The urban poor are active and dynamic, have a lot of knowledge and creativity and it is important to canalize this energy and local experience. People living in the informal want dignity, respect and social justice, and to fill roles as responsible citizens. They do not want to be viewed as victims of social exclusion (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997). They have priorities, wishes and visions of their own, but the problem with the self-building informal settlement is the lack of a coherent plan that can join the wishes of the residents and other stakeholders. This is what has to

be recognized by the external agent or developer in upgrading practices to create interaction with the individuals and communities and to support their wishes and visions (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2003).

## What is participatory planning?

“Participation is a road leading to democracy” (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2003).

Participation generates opportunities and alternatives and creates informed and productive citizens with responsibilities. The increased participation of the urban poor is evidence of a new approach to development (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2003).

The definition of the concept “participatory planning” has been sought after and presented by various different theorists with the aim to find a comprehensive overview of the term. What is commonly agreed on is the importance of recognizing that the need of the urban poor can not be met by implementing traditional housing policies (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). There is a need for “participatory urban upgrading” in the provision of shelter for urban informal settlements. Further, these methods calls for active involvement of the members of the community, to secure the enhancement and maintenance of their neighbourhoods in the long term perspective (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

“Participation is a continuous process that should lead to the continuity and sustainability of initiatives – to social, institutional, technical and financial sustainability” (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2003).

This paper will mainly be based on theories and discussions on participatory planning of the collaborative work of Naheel Hamdi and Reinhard Goethert and the cooperation of Ivo Emparato and Jeff Ruster.

## What is the appropriate level of participation?

According to Imparato and Ruster, there is no proof that “the more participation is better” (2003). Aiming for the highest level of participation has not proven to be feasible in every case. There are many factors and circumstances that makes participatory planning difficult since the low income communities often are

constrained by limited time frames, resources or social complications to be able to participate (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). Sometimes trust issues between different stakeholders are too difficult to overcome. Further, the scale or time limits of a project may be limiting the logistical and organizational opportunities to arrange beneficial participatory planning. Participation is often a time-consuming process, which sometimes makes it hard to justify this approach due to high expenses (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). There are many factors in the implementation of the process that may not be practical or economically feasible. Thus, the goal can not always be to achieve maximum participation. In some cases, the projects may benefit of a lower level of participation. What that level is differs from one case to the other, it could in practice mean that the participatory part of the design is limited to information exchange and consultation (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). Nonetheless, it should always be acquired to strive for a high level of participation in every case to seek its opportunities and limitations.

“The complexity of an urban upgrading program is due to local contexts, relations among social actors, institutional arrangements, and financial mechanisms“ (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). Participation is a long journey with many obstacles and there is no question that participatory planning can be fruitless, complex and ineffective if not administrated, practiced and implemented in the right way for a specific context. There seem to be many different levels of participation, many of which might not in reality be participatory at all. What is needed is to explore different options for the organization, methods and tools of participation in urban upgrading and shelter projects to enhance their positive long-term impact on a community (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

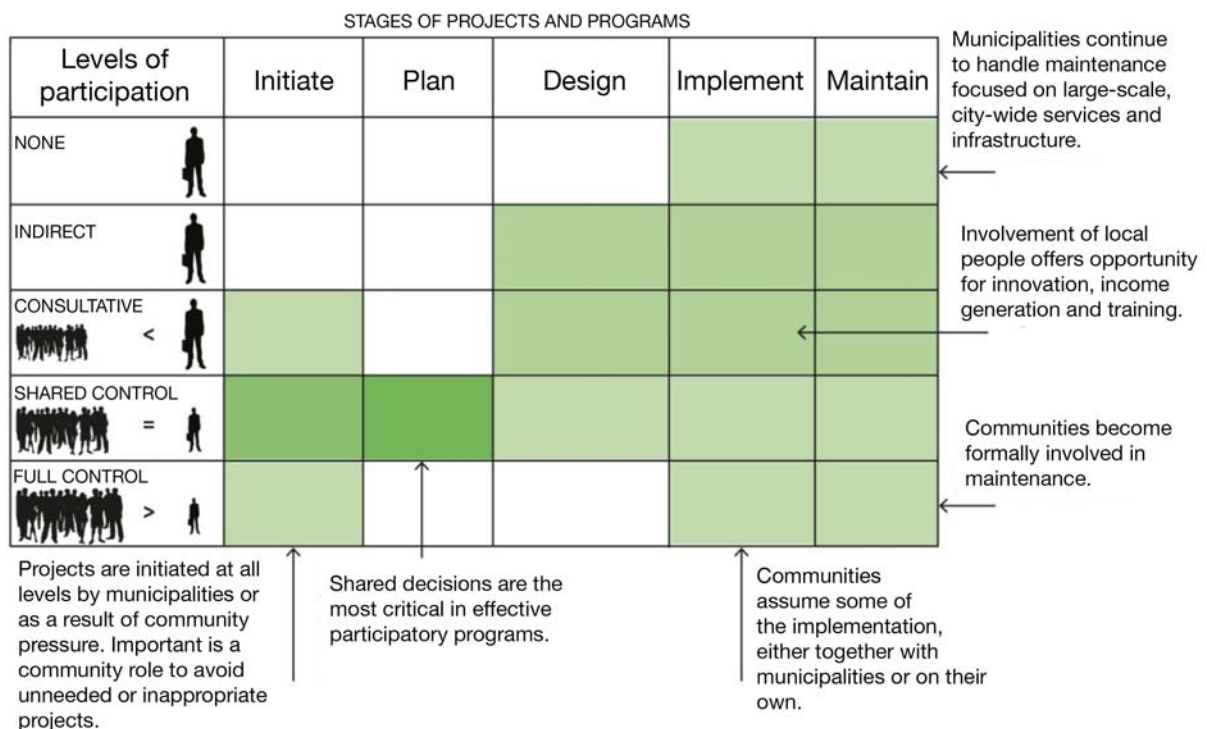
The community empowerment that can arise through a participatory process is a social benefit that goes beyond the physical. The empowerment of people is necessary for this process, even if it would take more time in practice to accomplish the goals of the participatory project. Urban planning is not just a consultation process, it should be viewed a process of mutual learning. Participatory planning creates a forum where the community becomes the expert. It is an exercise in citizenship building that does not begin nor end with the

planning process. Through the partnership of planners, architects and other external promoters, the community is able to address the concerns of daily life, with the result of a shared governance that benefits all. A realization of this has to be made when innovating and implementing strategies for community-based planning and design.

## How can participatory planning be organized?

The framework of participation planning developed by Hamdi and Goethert (1997) suggests that community participation is most efficient when implemented in a variety of different levels in the stages of an upgrading project. The main aspect of the framework is to be a tool for finding the ideal level of participatory planning in different stages of a development. The authors claim that the relationship between the community and the “external” agencies involved in a project should promote the highest common interest in every stage of the project. Thus is not the highest level of participation needed to achieve at every stage, but the most *efficient* level should be aimed for (Hamid & Goethert, 1997).

### FRAMEWORK OF PARTICIPATION AND STAGES OF PROJECTS



**Diagram 1.** Made by Larsson (2012) based on Hamdi and Goethert (1997).

According to the two authors, the different levels of community participation relates to five different stages in an upgrading project; initiation, planning, design, implementation and maintenance (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997). Further, there are five levels of community participation; none, indirect, consultative, shared control and full control. How the level of community participation is combined within the project has different benefits and disadvantages depending on type of project and context.

When the level of participation is “none” the project fully relies in the hands of the external developer. In this case there is a high risk of an unsatisfactory outcome since the needs of the community may not be responded to. This level of participation is often viewed as a fast solution and could therefore be necessary in rushed operations (Larsson, 2012). The “indirect” level of participation is site-specific. The external developer is not working directly with the community, and gets input and information through secondary resources. The level of participation is low and for projects with this approach to be able to succeed, it is crucial that the external actor can process information in an accurate way (Larsson, 2012). Hence, a high risk of insufficient outcomes is also connected to this approach.

A “consultative” role implies that the external developer makes decisions based on input and information from the community. The role of the external actor is to collect and evaluate information. The consultative level is often established to get a feeling of how ideas are being responded to by the community, but is less useful in bringing the ideas of the community forward. This is i.e. being used by municipalities to showcase their public projects, but where they cannot leave any room for community feedback (Larsson, 2012).

“Shared control” is a level of participation where the relationship between the community and the external developer seem to be of most equal character. This level is based on the insight that both instances has something to contribute to the project and are fully able to exchange knowledge and ideas (Larsson, 2012). “Full control”, on the other hand implies that the community is in charge of the specific project stage and that any other external developer functions as an asset to the



people. The role of the professionals in this case is to provide technical assistance or information that could be relevant for the community's decisions (Larsson, 2012).

Diagram 1 shows the ideal model of community participation according to Hamdi and Goethert. The more intense green colour indicates the ideal level of participation. The ideal level of participation is hence in the planning stage, when a shared control between the community and the external co-operator occurs. Further, the diagram indicates that the community could have the possibility of full control of the process in the stages of initiation, implementation and maintenance, but that it may not always be appropriate when the project is depending on large-scale services and city-wide infrastructure.

### 3 Urban Shelter Design

“People should be able to participate in decisions that shape their lives. And the design of the built environment is one of these decisions” (Bell, 2004.) It is important to state that architectural quality should not be a patronizing gift from architects to the urban poor communities. There should be a mutual exchange between the architect and the client and in the best case, a mutual benefit for both parts emerges. Through a participatory planning process, these benefits could be more clearly defined, understood by all and therefore more sought after as a common goal. This can be an important stepping stone in creating a platform for the development of a sustainable community. What is needed is a broad set of approaches to community-based design, that can be understood and useful in different local contexts. The architect needs to be responsible for developing these methods and tools used in the participatory process. In that way, the architect's work can be linked to the visions and needs of the community.

Architects and planners need to imply and enable strategies and methods where the local community plays the major role in improving their own living conditions. How can operational strategies of participatory planning develop to make room for a more accurate basis for an inclusive design of sustainable neighbourhoods?

## Methods and tools for participatory planning

There are numbers of ways to approach the design of neighbourhoods in informal settlements through a variety of methods of participatory planning. One of the difficult aspects of participatory planning in practice is knowing how to involve the community. What should be the roles and responsibilities of the people in the community? Should they be consultants, designers, constructors or something else?

According to UN-Habitat's Guidelines For the Preparation of Shelter Programmes (1984), inhabitants, or users, of an area chosen for upgrading should be involved already in the early stage of the project. The participants should be addressed to be able to organize themselves in a cohesive group. For participatory design to be efficient there is a need for representation of residents. The representations could be organized either via community organizations, church groups, women groups, schools etc. Further, there should be an organized support for the community groups to develop local initiatives, capacities and businesses. Participatory planning methodologies at the community level should also be linked to strategic city planning.

Further, subgroups and family representatives should be elected for larger gatherings and they should be invited to assess the proposals at different stages of the process (UN-Habitat, 1984). The guidelines describes the important basis for participatory planning, but arguably there should be more to the process than just assessments by the community. The development needs to be put more in the hands of community, including the actual design. The members of the community has to be more than just consultants to the professionals. They need to be *partners in participatory design*.

### The Example of CAP – Sri Lanka

One method developed by Hamdi and Goethert is the Community Action Planning (CAP) or MicroPlanning, which is an interactive approach to community-based planning (The World Bank Group). This approach was used as

part of the Million Houses Programme and 1,5 Million Houses Programme in Sri Lanka, a participatory approached project on a nation-wide scale between 1984-1994 (unesco.org). The CAP method consist of a structured series of active and intense community-based workshops of different lengths depending on the goal of the workshops, usually 2-5 days. The main idea of the workshops is to engage communities together with professionals to establish an equal working relationship. The task is to define and prioritize the socio-economic and physical issues and to plan strategies to tackle these issues via the establishment of an elementary work program based on the output of the workshops (The World Bank Group). In the work program a list is made on who does what, and when, to establish roles and responsibilities. The workshops are normally organized once each year and specific agreements has to be made continuously during the specified interval. There is normally a variety of half-day or one-day issue-specific workshops following the initial workshop. This depends on the need and stage of implementation of the project. In the case of the Million Homes Programme, some of the workshops included a land regularization workshop where the community did the layout of a block-out plan, a building guidelines workshop for formulating specific building codes for the community and a housing workshop for introduction of house loan packages. Further, a workshop supporting women's enterprise was held to initiate income generating activities (unesco.org).

The CAP-approach emphasize that the workshops should be accessible and located in the local, familiar area and therefore the workshops are normally held at a community centre, in the shade under a tree or at a temple or church (unesco.org). This local anchoring is important to allow instant validation of issues and to emphasize the role of the community (The World Bank Group). One strength of the CAP-method is that the workshops normally require a minimum of preparation, training and materials and a lot of the preparation can usually be done by the community. What is needed is the participants from the community, a facilitator or moderator that runs the workshops and makes sure that materials can be collected in an efficient way (The World Bank Group). Materials required for the workshops are recommended to be economically feasible and i.e. should

consist of large sheets of paper, cardboard, boxes, markers and a place for display of the ideas and creations (The World Bank Group). In this way, drawings and models are easily developed and displayed. The analogue working methods are, according to Hamdi and Goethert, effective tools since they represent a minimum of formality and emphasizes the working nature of the process. The output and materials created by the community could remain with the community as a physical record of the discussions of the workshops (unesco.org).

### The example of PUI - Medellín

Another participatory project in more recent years is the PUI-project, “Proyecto Urbano Integral” (Integral Urban Project) in Medellín, Colombia, developed by the local government during 2004-2007 (Larsson, 2012). The PUI-project was part of “Social Urbanism”, a local approach to physical improvement, social actions and citizen participation (Larsson, 2012). It was based on interdisciplinary actions, engaging different people and promoters. The management of the project was decentralized for a closer working relationship with the different upgrading areas in the city. The pilot project was tested in a part of the city called Noriental. Local community organizations and leaders were identified and they became the link between the community and the PUI-team (Larsson, 2012).

Noriental showed a variety of social structures, which led to a further decentralization of the project into four parts. Every part elected their own citizen committee who were to become consultants to the PUI-team in questions regarding infrastructure, public spaces and public facilities. Further, they became consultants in the refurbishment and improvement of the houses and neighbourhoods (Larsson, 2012). In every step of the process, the people of the communities were asked to participate in workshops and discussions. In the workshops, the participants got the opportunity to draw and visualize their visions, ideas and personal memories of specific neighbourhoods chosen for upgrading. The workshops were organized with the objective to include the members of the communities in the design process. The final design was carried out by the professionals in the PUI-team with the ideas of the community in mind.

The community had to accept the design proposal in the final stages before the construction phase begun.

The actual construction phase of the project was carried out by construction companies with a working force that consisted to 92% of local workers from the upgrading areas. By this approach, 3200 new job opportunities were created within the settlement (Larsson, 2012). The demolition of old buildings were made by former gang members as a part of the municipality's social action program.

The PUI-project in Medellín has been stated as one of the successful examples of participatory planning, but the actual participatory level of the process might be questioned in some stages, when referred to Hamdi and Goethert's (1997) framework for participatory planning. In the planning stage of the process it seems like the community reached the level of a "consultative" role, but according to Hamdi and Goethert's framework, the ideal level at this stage would be "shared control". This makes me question if more could have been done in this phase of the project. The design stage seems to have reached more of a "shared control"-level due to the cooperation between the community and professionals in the workshops, but I question if more could have been done to engage the people in the actual design. The implementation stage employed people from the community in parts due to the local construction workers, and the participation levels in this case ranged from "none" to "full control".

When it comes to the practical aspects of cooperative design between the community and the architect, there seem to be a need of developing field tools for practitioners, even though some good cases as the two examples mentioned above, indicates progress in the urban upgrading practice. What kind of tools would enhance the engagement of people and make them feel included in the design process? Is it possible do develop a "design tool box", an equal design platform for the professionals and community to put into practice in the field? What architects can bring to this work is to find ways to visualize urban planning and housing ideas for those without architectural or other professional training. If

developed creatively, new design tools could probably help the community to make more informed decisions regarding the layout and design proposed by the planner or architect. In this way, a better understanding between the parts may arise. Hopefully it could develop into an inclusive partnership in design where the responsibilities of the architect and community are well defined.

On a global scale, there is currently a technologically pushed trend that enables more people than ever to have easy access to information and to be connected to the rest of the world. This is manifested in different designed artefacts, such as social networks, smart-phones, computer tools and softwares. It is reasonable to believe that these modern artefacts, that often quite surprisingly reaches and gets adopted by the urban poor, could be useful as cooperative working tools. By using this common connectedness in participatory design, influential relationships across continents, societies and disciplines can emerge. Surely, these tools have not been fully put into practice in the cases of participatory design. What kind of differences could tools like these have on the participatory design process when developed in a creative way?

### The Example of “Block-by-Block” - Nairobi

In recent years, a number of creative outlets and methods have been tried out by different organisations working with the improvement of informal settlements. One of these methods, as an example, is the use of the three dimensional computer game Minecraft, created by Mojang. The computer game was recently developed into the software “Block-by-block”, a new partnership between the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Mojang. The aim with the software is to involve citizens and communities in the planning and design of urban public spaces and the development of their own neighbourhood and environment (Block-by-Block, 2013).

One of the reasons behind the development of this tool, was to test the difference between two- and three dimensional visualizations in the participatory design process. The partnership is part of the UN-Habitat’s Sustainable Urban

Development Network and will go on for four years (2012-2016), with the goal of upgrading 300 public spaces all over the world within the project time. The first pilot project was tested in the Kibera slums, the biggest slum in Nairobi, Kenya, and one of the largest in the world. The project surrounded the upgrading of the only available public football field and its surroundings in Kibera, and was a cooperation between Nairobi City Council, UN-Habitat and a number of community groups and organisations. The aim was to promote shared use, security and entrepreneurship and to work closely with the community (Block-by-Block, 2013).



*Presenting the Minecraft model to the participants (blockbyblock.org)*



The participatory part of the project was organized through workshops, where the participants was given the opportunity to discuss and visualize the sports field and its surrounding through Minecraft. The site has many different uses which meant that there were some disagreements between different members of the community and that some compromises had to be made. For example, the football players and a disabled people group had different takes on the use of the site, which caused disagreements and discussions during a long time (Westerberg, 2013).

The experience of the outcome of the project was that the people of the community easily understood the architects intentions when working in 3D-models, but that many had difficulties with understanding traditional architectural drawings and two dimensional birds-eye views. The 3D-model of the site was in the final step used to show improvements made by the architect after receiving input from the community. When presented to in 3D, many long-stretched disagreements between different groups of the community was finally solved (Westerberg, 2013).

The pilot projected tested by Block-by-Block in Kibera was successful and indicates that this kind of tool can be useful in a participatory design process. Currently, Block-by-block is being implemented in various urban settlements all over the world, from Haiti to Nepal, Rwanda, Ethiopia and India. The outcomes of the useage of this tool is indicating that it has the possibility of helping people with no formal or technical training to better understand a proposed design, and therefore it has the potential of being an effective tool when engaging local communities in a design process. The results of the Kibera-project implies that clear visualizations, either via physical models och computer models, should be implemented and tested further on a broader public to evaluate its possibilities as a design tool for others than architects and design professionals.

Working with new approaches to community-based planning and design, as shown in the Block-by-Block-project, can lead to a development of the participatory planning procedure towards a participatory *design*. The community can in this case be better represented and voiced through the actual design process, as partners in the design cooperation instead of “just” consultants in a project where professionals or institutions have the power over the design. There is a need for this kind of practical hands-on methods and tools that can be used for common visualization. To find the ideal form of participatory planning is difficult, and ongoing projects that implements new methods in this process needs to be monitored, compared and evaluated for better future use.



## 4 The Role of Architects

Development needs innovative mentalities and new forces, and architects are important actors in this process. Today, there is a discussion why architects in most cases do not appear to have a place in institutionalized slum improvement practices. The field has developed in a direction without the direct participation of architectural professionals. The architectural profession remains largely disconnected from larger practices concerning slum upgrading (Nickerson, 2014). What are the consequences of this?

Shelter should be more than a house; it is a space for personal fulfilment, security and social and cultural expression. Further, provision of shelter should be more than just the building of houses: it includes the development of prosperous and sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. It is about providing for social and cultural expression and about battling the imbalances in social and economic systems. The power of good shelter provision cannot be underestimated, and the architect is essential in this work. Without the architect's involvement in slum upgrading, many good solutions and physical qualities in the built environment may be lost. The architect is trained for creating and developing good spatial qualities, but needs the input from, and collaboration with, people to create good homes and sufficient public spaces for different local contexts.

Architects' greatest contribution to communities can be as form-givers for others, shaping and improving lives in a fundamental and personal way. One of the architect's tasks, when addressing a community in need, is to identify a problem, whether it is social, cultural or environmental, that can be solved by a built form or space. By finding the missing links, that causes problems in a society, community or family, the architect can respond by making changes in the built environment that could lead to an improvement in the everyday life of the clients or community. There are reasons to believe that an increased involvement by, and cooperation with, the local community, is crucial to help the architect to find the accurate solutions to the problem areas identified.

As argued, the responsibility of the development of any informal settlement should not solemnly rely on the local community. Even though a bottom-up approach is important, it is reasonable to argue the involvement of top-down developmental institutions. But then, authorities and governments need to change their attitude and approach towards the urban poor and lose their fear of the empowerment of people. They need to see the urban poor as an asset rather than a problem and trust the people's ability to make good decisions. In short, give them more power to shape their own lives. With good top-down leadership, the people can be guided in the participation process and get proper information as a basis for the decisions regarding planning and design. Hamdi and Goethert (1997) means that the role of the professionals in community-based projects should therefore be as mediators and teachers. In my opinion, they should also be developers of the methodology and tools for the partnership in the community-based practice.

Professional guidance from architects and planners should be required in the slum upgrading practice, since i.e. the current stream of newly graduated creative talents could have a major impact on finding new affordable, technological and sustainable solutions which are not known by, or accessible to, the urban poor. At the same time, the knowledge and traditions of the urban poor is crucial to involve in the practice. They may have great knowledge of local building materials and construction methods that could be useful input for the design and construction of houses. The different expertise provided by the professionals and the community should complement each other. The cooperation between professionals and local communities needs to be established and developed in a creative way, and they may differ in different project due to local context. The technical aspects of the built world requires the expertise of the architects and the planners and it is they who must help people to be involved in decisions regarding the design of their built environment (Bell, 2004).

Referring back to Hamdi and Goethert, I agree that it is important to have a variety of levels of community participation in different stages of upgrading practices. At a certain stage of a project, it might be more efficient if the community takes the role of consultants to i.e. the architect. But, in another phase

of the same project there might be reason to enhance the role of the community into “shared control” or “full control” for the sake of the social benefits that could emerge. If involving the community in the implementation or maintenance stage of a project, there are great possibilities for local innovation, income generation and growth, entrepreneurship and training that could benefit both individuals and the whole community in the long-term perspective. The external promoter involved in a project, needs to be creative in finding the right level of participation in the different stages of a development, and make sure that the community are able to participate despite their physical, economical or social limitations.

An important aspect that I think is missing in literature in general today, is how the participatory planning is being received and evaluated by the residents in the informal settlements involved in the participatory practice. By learning from the people’s opinions and experiences of all stages of an upgrading project, and their life after the project completion, a more full and objective representation of participatory planning can emerge.

One of my conclusions are, that the role of the architect or the planner goes beyond the design; architects, landscape architects and planners should try to solve social problems through design. Therefore, they have the responsibility to *engage people* in the design process to find the solutions that will help address these social problems. It is up to the creativity of the professionals to develop new tools that engage people and make them interested and aware of what their neighbourhood and surroundings could be like. The architect should encourage the local community to fantasize, discuss and evaluate what is needed in their neighbourhoods to improve lives. Not to mention, make the community well informed for the decision making. The methods for reaching these platforms of discussion certainly should vary due to local contexts, but I believe that the development and implementations of these methods are equally important as the actual physical design.

Architecture needs to return to the social agenda and architects and planners should become more involved in building for the urban poor and thus contributing

to the physical and social improvements in the informal settlements. Architects need to increase the number of people that they serve, since the greater public without access to architects, also should benefit from good design. Today, there is an opportunity for a reinvention of the architectural profession. The responsibility within the profession seems to be returning to social and environmental concerns. Large institutions, non-governmental institutions, individuals, for-profit and non-profit architecture firms, community design centers and non-profit organizations are increasing initiatives and experimenting with methods to address the living conditions of the underserved (Bell, 2004). This brings possibilities and opportunities for this emerging sector that plans, design and builds, for the broader population. A new notion of architectural services can surely expand to provide quality design, and more sustainable solutions for more people and especially for those currently underserved. To achieve this, there is a need for development and evaluation of new methods and tools for a *shared design process*. This will be the task of the community architect in the future.

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